

REMARKS

Claims 1-43 are pending in this patent application with claims 1-28 being allowed and claims 30-32, 36, 38, 39, 42, and 43 being objected to as being allowable but dependent upon a rejected base claim. Claims 29, 33-35, 37, and 40-41 (of which claims 29 and 33 are independent claims) stand rejected.

Applicants Did Not Receive Advisory Action

On May 20, 2004, Applicants attorney, Roger A. Heppermann, conducted a telephonic interview with Examiner McCarthy. Subsequently, on May 24, 2004, Applicants filed an Amendment within two months of the mailing date of the Final Office Action (March 24, 2004).

On June 15, 2004, Applicants received an Interview Summary Record from the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office with a mailing date of June 11, 2004. Applicants did not, however, receive an advisory action.

Because Applicants had not received an advisory action by the beginning of September, 2004, the undersigned contacted Examiner McCarthy to determine the status of the case. Examiner McCarthy notified the undersigned that the Examiner had, in fact, prepared an Advisory Action and that the Examiner had intended the Advisory Action to be mailed with the Interview Summary Record. It appears, however, that two copies of the Interview Summary Record were mailed instead of one copy of the Interview Summary Record and one copy of the Advisory Action. Therefore, the Advisory Action apparently was never mailed by the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office, and Applicants never received the Advisory Action.

Because Applicants have not yet received the Advisory Action, Applicants respectfully submit that a petition for extension of time is not needed for submission of this amendment. *See MPEP 706.07(f)*. Alternatively, Applicants respectfully request that a new time period for reply to the Final Office Action be set. *See MPEP 710.06*.

If an extension of time is required, however, Applicants hereby request an extension for the required period of time, and the Director is hereby authorized to charge the required extension of time fee to our Deposit Account No. 13-2855, under Order No. 06005/35530. A duplicate copy of this paper is enclosed.

Claim Amendments

Claims 1-17 are amended to make clear that Applicants did not intend these claims as step-plus-function claims. These claims are not amended for patentability.

Claims 30, 36, 38, and 42 are amended, in accordance with examiner's suggestion, to be in independent form including all of the limitations of their base claims and any intervening claims. Therefore, amended claims 30, 36, 38, and 42 as well as claims 31-32 and 43, which depend from claims 30 and 42, respectively, are in condition for allowance. These claims are of the same scope as they were originally presented.

Claims 29 and 33-35 have been canceled in order to expedite prosecution of the application. Claims 37, 40, and 41 have been amended to depend from claim 36, which Applicants respectfully submit has been placed in allowable form by way of this amendment.

By this amendment, the number of independent claims has been increased by two (2), but the total number of claims has been reduced by four (4). The Director is hereby authorized to charge the fee for the consideration of two (2) additional independent claims (\$172.00), or any other fee which may be required for consideration of the claims, to Deposit Account No. No. 13-2855 of Marshall, Gerstein & Borun LLP, under Order No. 06005/35530.

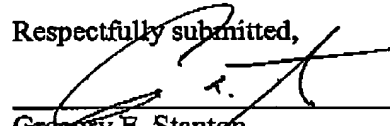
CONCLUSION

Applicants have now made an earnest attempt to place this case in condition for immediate allowance. For the foregoing reasons, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and allowance of claims 30-32, 36, 38, 39, 42, and 43, to which the Examiner had objected, as well as rejected claims 37, and 40-41.

If there are matters that can be discussed by telephone to further the prosecution of this application, Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner call their attorney at the number listed below.

The Director is hereby authorized to charge any deficiency in the fees filed, asserted to be filed or which should have been filed herewith (or with any paper hereafter filed in this application by this firm) to our Deposit Account No. 13-2855, under Order No. 06005/35530. A duplicate copy of this paper is enclosed.

Respectfully submitted,



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